

# Chapter 8

## IMPLEMENTATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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This chapter answers common questions about implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI) at the middle and high school levels. Although there are common design features for both elementary and secondary settings, there are fundamental differences in focus of intervention. Secondary RTI cannot be implemented with integrity in middle and high schools (a) until there is a mission statement with a clearer and more focused special education service delivery model, and (b) unless there is a commitment for improving the quality of content area instruction to make it both more effective and inclusive. The first part of the chapter describes the importance of a secondary-level special education mission statement. Without a clearer and more focused mission, regardless of RTI, special education will continue to be characterized by low-power content area tutoring or parallel content classes that function like tracking. The second part of the chapter describes the likenesses and differences between RTI implementation at the elementary and secondary levels, including a description of tools and examples.

### ***1. Why has there been less information on secondary RTI?***

Without a doubt, the why, what, and how ideas of RTI at the secondary level (i.e., middle and high schools) are less well known than at the elementary level. A quick scan of the RTI Action Network ([www.rtinetwork.org](http://www.rtinetwork.org)) of the National Center on Learning Disabilities shows significantly more resources in its elementary sections than middle school or high school sections. This discrepancy is due, in part, to some larger issues in what constitutes the mission of special education at the secondary level. It's possible (if not probable) that some educators believe the limited implementation of secondary RTI is predicated on there being no clear *plan* for how to do it.

What may surprise educators is that although RTI has been implemented significantly less often at the secondary level, the first instances of high school applications began in 1983 (Tindal & Germann, 1991; Tindal, Shinn, Walz, & Germann, 1987), shortly after elementary-level implementation in this cooperative began around 1979. Lack of enthusiasm for secondary RTI also may stem from a general skepticism as to whether there is any research on “RTI” at the secondary level. Fortunately, secondary RTI implementation, like elementary implementation, is conducted based on a solid core of “what works” to increase achievement and behavioral outcomes, including effective reading instruction, increasing content area literacy (e.g., Biancarosa & Snow, 2004), the Strategic Instruction Model (e.g., Lenz, Deshler, & Kissam, 2003), effective secondary behavior support (e.g., Sprick, 2006) and numerous other validated interventions.

## The Importance of a Special Education Mission Statement

### 2. Why is a secondary special education mission statement important?

Concerns about what constitutes the special education service delivery model for secondary schools have been long-standing. Unlike the elementary level, where special education is almost exclusively focused on remediating intensive basic skill deficits, once students enter middle school or high school, the special education services a student receives are much less predictable. This concern was noted almost 20 years ago (Zigmond, 1990). As noted then by Zigmond, what was delivered varied from content area tutoring to vocational education, to strategy instruction, to reading or other basic skills instruction, to “alternative” content area courses.

It seems that little has changed. Compounding this unpredictable service delivery model is that, too often, the special education services are not aligned with students’ needs. The service delivery focus is on the “place” or “where” of service delivery (e.g., full-inclusion or pull out) at the expense of what intervention(s) special education delivers. It is as likely that a student *with* severe reading needs *does not* receive an intensive reading intervention as a student *without* severe reading needs *does* receive an intensive reading intervention.

Of these varied and unpredictable service delivery models, a more recent evaluation suggested “special education programs — especially resource rooms — lack definition and can easily become tutoring programs — or anything else others deem it to be” (Conderman & Petersen, 2007). These authors have typified these services as “disjointed, uncoordinated educational programs . . . that rarely lead to the type of instructional synergy that is required for students to make dramatic achievement gains” (Conderman & Petersen, 2005).

### 3. What would a secondary special education mission statement aligned to RTI look like?

The special education service delivery mission statement should be aligned with students’ needs as represented by Table 1 below. Students with mild disabilities who receive special education should dependent on their needs, be entitled to either: (a) intensive, scientifically based basic skill services, or (b) support for content course success (Lenz, Deshler, & Kissam, 2003; Schumaker, Deshler, & McKnight, 2002; Schumaker, Deshler, & McKnight, 1991, in press).

**Table 1**

#### **A Graphic Organizer for a Special Education Mission Statement Aligned with Students’ Needs and RTI**

Current Level of Performance and Educational Need(s)	Severe Basic Skill Discrepancy	Lack of Success and Satisfactory Progress in Content Courses
Type of Intervention	Intensive, Scientifically Based Basic Skill Intervention	Support for Content Area Success
Examples of Scientifically Based Interventions	Corrective Reading, Language!	<i>Strategic Instruction Model</i> (SIM)
Service Provider	Special Education	General Education with Targeted Special Education Support
Progress Monitoring Tool	Curriculum-Based Measurement	Quality Grading System
Accountability Tools	IEP	IEP with a Mainstream Consultation Agreement

Special education services based on this simple mission statement were first put into place in six high schools in Minnesota in 1982 and are described in more detail in Tindal and Germann (1991)). Avoid secondary special education service delivery models that focus on content area tutoring conducted by special education personnel who are not, and cannot be, content area experts in all areas.

## Scientifically Based Interventions in Secondary Schools

### ***4. What are examples of scientifically based interventions for students with severe basic skill needs?***

It is important to know that when a student receives special education, IDEA 2004 requires that the IEP contain a statement that the IEP is based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practical (Rose & Zirkel, 2007) or, in other words, that the intervention(s) is *scientifically based*. The first step in this process for students who receive intensive basic skill interventions is to ensure that there are peer-reviewed studies either “accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review” (20 USC 7801(37); 20 USC 1411(e)(2)(C)(xi)).

In reading, what may be surprising is that many secondary special education teachers lack scientifically based reading or other basic skills interventions, even though it is reasonably easy to find information about such programs. Too many special education teachers’ interventions rely on teaching reading using content textbooks, informal or untested programs, or computers.

Systematic searches of computerized journal databases (e.g., EBSCO) can provide information on the availability of peer-reviewed studies. Results of panel reviews can be attained by federally funded sites such as the Florida Center for Reading Research ([www.fcrr.org](http://www.fcrr.org)). This site provides an alphabetic review of intensive reading interventions for students with mild to severe reading needs. Included in Table 1, above, are two examples from a number of intensive reading programs that would meet scientifically based standards. If a student receives special education and has severe basic skills deficits, then consistent with accomplishment of the mission statement in Table 1, special education teachers must be given powerful basic skills programs to deliver, and the focus of their direct service should be on delivering those programs.

### ***5. What are examples of scientifically based interventions to support students with disabilities in content area courses?***

If a secondary student receives special education but does *not* have a severe basic skills deficit, but is not progressing in content area classes, the goal, then, would *not* be to have special educators: (a) tutor the student, (b) help with homework, or (c) teach another variation of that content classroom with easier materials and lower expectations (Lenz et al., 2003). Instead, scientifically based interventions to support students in content area instruction should be used.

Shortly after passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, the field recognized that there was a critical shortage of scientific information and tools and strategies to support students with mild disabilities in content area courses. Federal resources for research and development were directed to help solve this shortage of information and tools, culminating in the Strategic Instruction Model (SIM), the critical focus of the mission statement in Table 1, above. In 1978, through the University of Kansas Institute for Research on Learning Disabilities (KU-IRLD), a program of research was established that has continued each and every year since. Evolving from the KU-IRLD, the Center for Research on Learning at the University of Kansas produced SIM, scientifically based

strategies to support students with disabilities and *all* at-risk students in content classes grades 4-12. For more detail, see the work of Don Deshler, Jean Schumaker, and Keith Lenz, among others (Lenz et al., 2003; Schumaker et al., 2002; Schumaker et al., 1991, in press) and the Center for Research on Learning ([www.ku-crl.org](http://www.ku-crl.org)).

SIM is based on the body of work evolved from *teaching routines*, those interventions focused on what teachers can use, to *learning strategies*, which have a focus on what student use for success. For example, teachers learn *teaching routines* ranging from broader skills like how to organize a course, to more specific strategies such as how to enhance students' recall. Students acquire *learning strategies* that range from strategies for remembering (e.g., FIRST-Letter Mnemonic Strategy, Paired Associates Strategy) to strategies for motivation (e.g., Self-Advocacy Strategy). In SIM, special education teachers and general education teachers "work cooperatively to improve the performance of low-achieving students" in general education content classes (Schumaker et al., 1991, p. 475).

In fleshing out the requisite special education mission statement required for RTI implementation, it is necessary for special education staff to be competent in SIM as well as intensive basic skill instruction. They serve as direct instructors to students in the learning strategies and as trainers, coaches and consultants to general education teachers in teaching routines.

## Similarities and Differences Between Elementary and Secondary RTI

### ***6. How is RTI at the secondary level the same (and different) from RTI at the elementary level?***

Presuming the critical task of adopting a clear and focused special education mission statement is completed and actions are taken to ensure its implementation, then RTI at the secondary level becomes more viable. When RTI is implemented at the secondary level, it is important to have a clear idea as to what RTI *is* and what it *is not*. This challenge is the *same* for both elementary and secondary settings. Unfortunately, the term RTI has become ubiquitous in the professional literature in the past four years, being used solely to describe the specific learning disability (SLD) eligibility process to a label for widespread changes in educational service delivery models, including, but not limited to, special education.

Of course, the origin of the term RTI derives from IDEA 2004 with respect to the choice provided to local education agencies (LEAs) to use a process that determines if a child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as part of the SLD identification process. However, in most publications describing RTI, the content is much more than about SLD identification. Instead, RTI is about building effective early intervening services (EIS) for *all students* in a multi-tier model, typically three, that is scientifically based and is increasingly "intense" as the academic and/or behavioral needs increase. Thus, RTI is really about overall school improvement and significant systems change.

### ***7. What are the common RTI features for both elementary and secondary schools?***

Major federal documents (Batsche, et al., 2005; Burdette, 2007; Danielson, 2006) have laid out a set of nine common features of RTI and EIS when they become a service delivery model. These features are shown in the first column in Table 2, below. The second column provides some common ways that elementary schools put these features into practice. The third and fourth columns identify how the features are implemented in middle and high school respectively as part of RTI.

Table 2

## Comparison of Elementary and Secondary RTI Across Identified RTI Common Features

RTI Feature	Elementary	Middle School	High School
Students Receive High Quality, Research-Based Instruction by Qualified Staff in General Education	Emphasis on Basic Skills	Emphasis on Basic Skills Shifting to Content Knowledge	Emphasis on Content Knowledge
Is Based on a Multi-Tier Model of Increasing Intensity of Instruction and Intervention	Tiers 2 and 3 Also Address Basic Skills	Tiers 2 and 3 Also Address Basic Skills	Tier 2 Supports Content Knowledge; Tier 3 Addresses Basic Skills
General Educators Assume an Active Role in Students' Assessment in General Curriculum	Members of the CBM "family" of basic skills	CBM and Grades	Grades
School Staff Conducts Universal Screening of Academics and Behavior	Standard; Uses R-CBM for Reading	Standard; Uses Maze CBM for Reading; More Driven by Individual Screening than Universal Screening	More Driven by Individual Screening than Universal Screening; Selective (e.g., Grade 9); Uses Maze CBM for Reading
Staff Implements Specific, Research-Based Interventions to Address Students' Difficulties	Targeted Toward Basic Skills	Targeted Toward Basic Skills	Targeted Toward Basic Skills and Content Knowledge
Staff Conducts Continuous Progress Monitoring of Student Progress	Members of the CBM "family" of basic skills	CBM for Basic Skills and Grades for Content Knowledge	CBM for Basic Skills and Grades for Content Knowledge
Staff Uses Progress Monitoring Data and Explicit Decision Rules to Determine Intervention Effectiveness and Needed Modifications	Targeted Toward Basic Skills	Targeted Toward Basic Skills	Targeted Toward Basic Skills and Content Knowledge
Systematic Assessment is Made Regarding the Fidelity with Which Instruction and Interventions Are Implemented	Targeted Toward Basic Skills	Targeted Toward Basic Skills	Targeted Toward Basic Skills and Content Knowledge
Referral for a Comprehensive Evaluation is Made as Appropriate, Keeping in Mind All Due Process	Same	Same	Same

What seems obvious is that all nine features are important and operationalized for both elementary and secondary settings. What also seems obvious is that there are some serious differences among elementary, middle, and high school RTI applications on a number of elements.

### ***8. What are the differences in the primary focus of research-based intervention?***

At the risk of over-simplification, what constitutes the focus of the "high-quality, research-based instruction in general education" feature in Table 2, above, differs from elementary, middle, and high school by setting. RTI at the elementary level is about a focus on basic skills success (e.g., reading, behavior). Interventions at Tiers 2 and 3 are targeted toward increasingly intensive basic skills interventions.

In contrast, the focus of high school RTI is on general education content area classroom success. Intensive basic skill intervention remains the Tier 3 focus. Tier 2 is targeted toward supporting students in content area classes using *SIM*.

“In between” is middle school RTI. Most commonly, at the lower grades in middle school, RTI looks much like at the elementary grades; that is, the priority focus is basic skills success across the three tiers. However, in most communities, at the upper end of middle school, the design priorities look more like high school with an emphasis on content area class success in Tiers 1 and 2, with Tier 3 retaining its focus on meeting the needs of students with severe basic skill deficits.

## Tiers 1, 2 and 3: Screening, Instruction and Intervention

### 9. What does high-quality reading instruction look like at Tier 1?

When RTI is implemented in a planned way, reading and language arts instruction typically takes one of two forms: (a) use of a scientifically based, published curriculum, or (b) ensuring that all teachers are expert in addressing content area literacy. See for example, Diamond and Martin (2004) for examples of the former. See Torgesen, et al., (2007) or Lenz, Ehren, and Deshler (2005) for examples of the latter. Of course, it would be desirable to have *both* scientifically based language arts curriculum *and* all teachers expert in delivering instruction that improves content area literacy. However the ability to do this must be driven by the reading and literacy needs of the students and the commitment of the school to intensive staff development.

Diamond and Martin (2004), for example, delineated a sample set of curriculum-driven Tier 1 options for a typical middle school and high school. These options, including critical course names and period lengths, materials, assessment, and professional development, are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

#### Sample Strategies for Curriculum-Driven Reading and Languages Arts Instruction at Middle and High School

Level	Course Name and Total Time	Materials	Assessment	Necessary Professional Development
Middle School	English 2 Periods	<i>Prentice Hall Literature</i> (Penguin Ed.) plus core novels, plus outside reading	Standard district measures and curriculum tests	On the <i>Prentice Hall</i> program
High School	English Grades 9-12 1 Period	<i>Prentice Hall Literature</i> Literature (Penguin Ed.) plus core novels, plus outside reading	Standard district measures and curriculum tests	On the <i>Prentice Hall</i> program

Adapted from Diamond, L., & Martin, J. (2004). *What reading leaders should know about successful reading instruction: Participant resource guide*. Berkeley, CA: Consortium on Reading Excellence (CORE).

In this instance, because it is a typical middle school or high school, it is presumed that more than 80 percent of students have mastered basic reading skills, so a research-based language arts pro-

gram, such as *Prentice-Hall Literature* (Feldman, Vaughn, Kinsella, & Deshler, 2006), is recommended. It should be noted that although scientifically based language arts programs address many elements of good reading (e.g., vocabulary and comprehension instruction and strategies), they do not teach basic reading skills. A standard, well-designed language arts program, augmented by novels and outside reading, enables teachers to meet the needs of most students. It also facilitates staff development training to ensure that fidelity of implementation can be focused.

When a middle school or high school has a higher proportion of students who have general reading achievement needs, Tier 1 instruction should be modified to include more explicit reading instruction. When this situation arises, the basic recommendations from Diamond and Martin (2004) can be modified to reflect the instructional features of more intensive Tier 2 intervention (see Table 4). In this example, the standard *Prentice Hall* program is enhanced by using its supplemental remedial program, *Reader's Companion*, and a more direct instruction intervention focusing on vocabulary and multi-syllabic words, *Rewards* (Archer & Gleason, 2001).

Table 4

**Sample Strategies for Curriculum-Driven Reading Languages Arts Instruction  
at Middle and High School with More Serious Reading Needs**

Level	Course Name and Total Time	Materials	Assessment	Necessary Professional Development
Middle School	English 2 Periods	<i>Prentice Hall Literature</i> plus <i>Readers Companion</i> , plus <i>Rewards</i> , plus outside reading	Standard district measures; Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM)	On the <i>Prentice Hall</i> program, including intervention component, <i>Rewards</i>
High School	English Grades 9-12 2 Periods	<i>Prentice Hall Literature</i> plus <i>Readers Companion</i> , plus <i>Rewards</i> , plus outside reading	Standard district measures and curriculum tests; CBM	On the <i>Prentice Hall</i> program, including intervention component, <i>Rewards</i>

Adapted from Diamond, L., & Martin, J. (2004). *What reading leaders should know about successful reading instruction: Participant resource guide*. Berkeley, CA: Consortium on Reading Excellence (CORE).

## **10. What is content area literacy at Tier 1?**

Many schools face challenges in ensuring students exit school literate. However, as identified in the Carnegie Report (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004), “if students are to be truly prepared for college, work, and citizenship, they cannot settle for a modest level of proficiency in reading and writing. Rather they will need to develop advanced literacy skills that are required in order to master the academic content areas. Content area literacy must be the cornerstone of any movement.” (p. 1).

In the past 15 years, considerable knowledge has been obtained regarding the instructional strategies and methods that all content area teachers should acquire and the means by which these strategies and methods can be acquired and implemented (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Heller & Greenleaf, 2007; McPeak & Trygg, 2007; Torgesen, et al., 2007). Positive school-based outcomes in communities with diverse needs have been documented (McPeak & Trygg, 2007). The complexity of training all secondary

teachers the skills required for content area literacy can be reduced by selecting and implementing a validated program. The *Content Literacy Continuum* (CLC; Lenz, Ehren, & Deshler, 2005) is one example.

### **11. How are multi-tiered interventions structured?**

As described in Table 2, *supra*, middle school Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions are structured in alignment with the priorities at the elementary level. That is, scientifically based, more intensive basic skills interventions are implemented. Again, systematic searches of computerized journal databases and panel reviews such as the Florida Center for Reading Research ([www.fcrr.org](http://www.fcrr.org)) are critical to this process.

At upper grades in middle school and at the high school in most communities, Tier 2 shifts its focus to supporting success in content area instruction. As described earlier, here again, SIM becomes important.

### **12. How can the impact of Tier 2 and 3 basic skill interventions be increased?**

Many currently delivered remedial and special education interventions for basic skills are too weak, especially in reading. In reading, for example, three unique factors must be given more prominence with older students.

First, avoid Band-Aid interventions — those that focus on single skills like fluency. Although these types of interventions are easy to implement and schedule (e.g., they're not very time-consuming), and frequently are advertised as “one of the five reading components” for older students, they often are not powerful enough to reduce the gap. Older students typically have multiple, highly interrelated needs. For example, they may have poor vocabularies as a result of the lack of wide reading (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998), which compounds comprehension and interest in reading. As a result, they don't read much and they don't like to read, resulting in poor reading skills. Instead, use a “bandage” program, one that is intensive and covers the major areas of reading. Again, sites like the Florida Center for Reading Research can be invaluable in separating out Band-Aid from bandage programs.

Second, attention must be directed to increasing reading volume. Wide reading, inside and outside of school, must be a major focus. Here is where computer-assisted instructional programs can be of value. The advantage of programs such as *Jamestown Reading Navigator* (JRN) and *Read 180* is that they provide more opportunities to read material beyond their teacher-led components, and they are written to be motivating and interesting to the adolescent reader.

Third, the importance of motivation cannot be emphasized enough. This topic will align with a later area, building an effective grading system.

### **13. How is universal screening conducted at middle and high school?**

As shown in Table 2, *supra*, universal screening is another common RTI implementation feature. Early identification of students with basic skills needs is typically accomplished using a member of the Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) “family,” like *DIBELS* or *AIMSweb*. See Shinn (2008) for more information on using CBM across three tiers, including RTI. When the focus of RTI shifts to success in content area courses, then the *routine* need for universal screening must be examined with respect to the intervention focus as well as technical issues (e.g., feasibility, quality of the screening tool).

Of course, at early middle school (e.g., Grade 6) when the focus of universal screening is identifying students to receive Tier 2 or Tier 3 basic skills interventions, universal screening using simple,

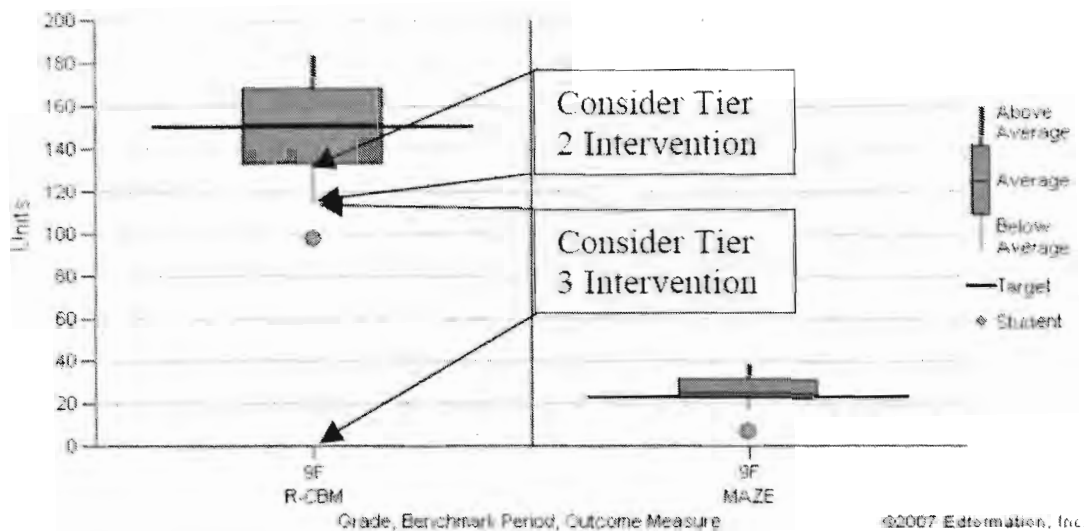


short, and accurate basic skill tests like CBM remain the tools of choice. However, instead of using oral reading (Reading Curriculum-Based Measurement; R-CBM), time economies can be gained by screening middle school students in small or class-sized groups using Maze-CBM, a three-minute silent reading test that requires students to select one of three word choices that preserve meaning for words that were systematically deleted (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1992; Jenkins & Jewell, 1993; Shin, Deno, & Espin, 2000; Shinn & Shinn, 2003).

Examine Figure 1 below. In this community, universal screening is conducted by testing all students with Maze CBM usually in their English classes. Each student's scores are compared to the grade-level peers. Maze results in Figure 2 are presented on the right. In the figure below, the "dot" represents a specific student's scores on both measures. The boxes represent the range of *average* (25th-75th percentiles) Grade 6 students on Grade 6 passages tested on Maze-CBM and R-CBM. Scores on the line below the box correspond to those of *below-average* or *at-risk* readers (10th to 25th percentiles). Scores lower than the 25th percentile are often used as the criterion for potential Tier 2 interventions. Scores lower than the 10th percentile suggest the need for a Tier 3 intervention. When Maze scores suggest the potential need for Tier 2 or 3, students then are tested individually using an oral reading test, R-CBM. This student performed well below the 10th percentile on Maze CBM and follow-up testing on R-CBM confirmed that the student should be considered in need of an intensive reading intervention or Tier 3 intervention.

Figure 1

#### Universal Screening Results Based on R-CBM and Maze for a Grade 6 Student



As students progress through the grades, however, it is important to examine the need to continue to screen *all* students in basic skills beyond Grade 6, especially in high-performing communities. If nearly all students have mastered basic skills, it seems of questionable efficacy to screen all students. Alternately, at the middle school level, candidates for Tier 3 interventions could be identified by extant achievement test information (e.g., state tests), presuming that the "right" students are targeted (e.g., students with basic skill needs).

An interesting pattern has been observed in the past few years with respect to universal screening at the high school level. Increasingly, high schools are screening Grade 9 students for basic skill deficits and are providing Tier 2 remedial reading programs. An example is shown in Figure 1, above. In reading, either R-CBM or Maze CBM can be used or potentially extent data, again presuming that

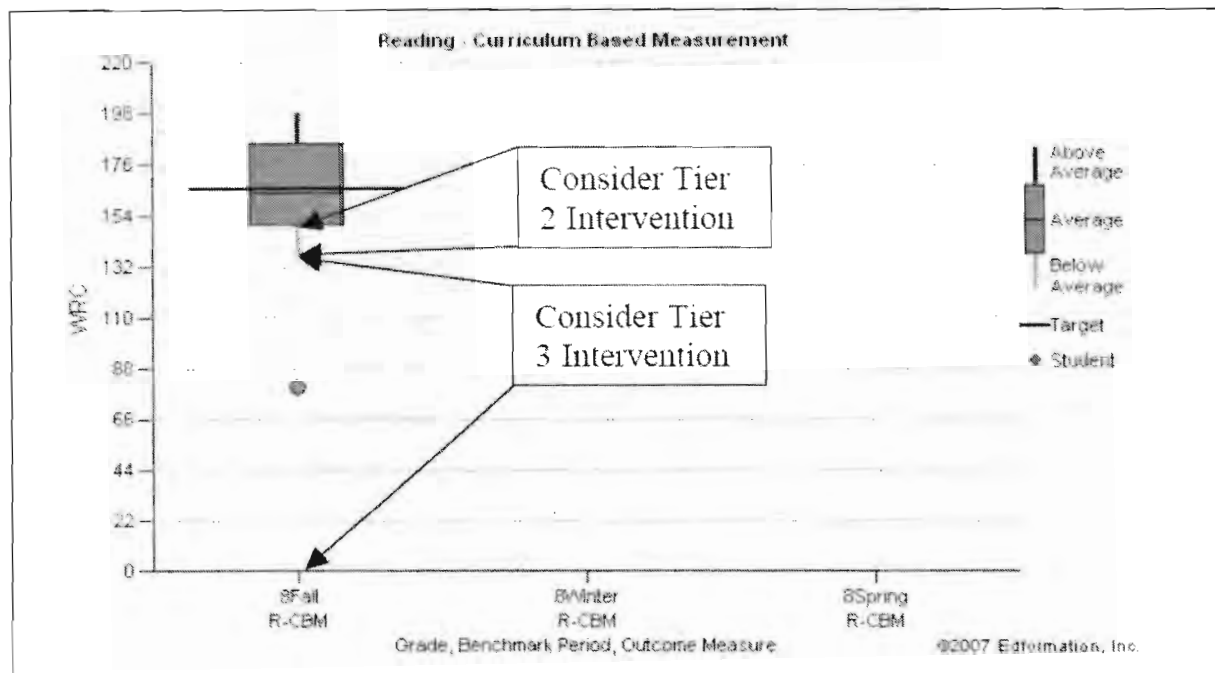
the “right” students are identified. In large part, the use of universal screening is dependent on the needs of students for basic skill interventions.

**14. If universal screening is not used, how are students with potentially severe needs identified?**

With older students when universal screening is no longer efficient, it still is desirable to use a systematic screening process, Problem Identification, to identify a significant basic skills performance discrepancy that may require more intensive intervention than provided in Tier 1. An example is shown in Figure 2, below. This figure shows the R-CBM scores for a ninth-grade student referred because of concerns in his content area courses. One hypothesis for the low performance was a basic reading skill problem. In this community, a severe basic skills reading problem is defined as below the 10th percentile of eighth-graders on Grade 8 reading passages. This was the criterion established by a district RTI leadership team that fulfilled their definition of minimum basic skills proficiency. The “dot” again represents the median of the student’s three oral reading scores (83 Words Read Correctly; WRC). This student read well below the 10th percentile and might be considered in need of an intensive reading intervention or Tier 3.

**Figure 2**

**Individual Screening (Problem Identification) Results Based on R-CBM for a Referred Grade 9 Student**



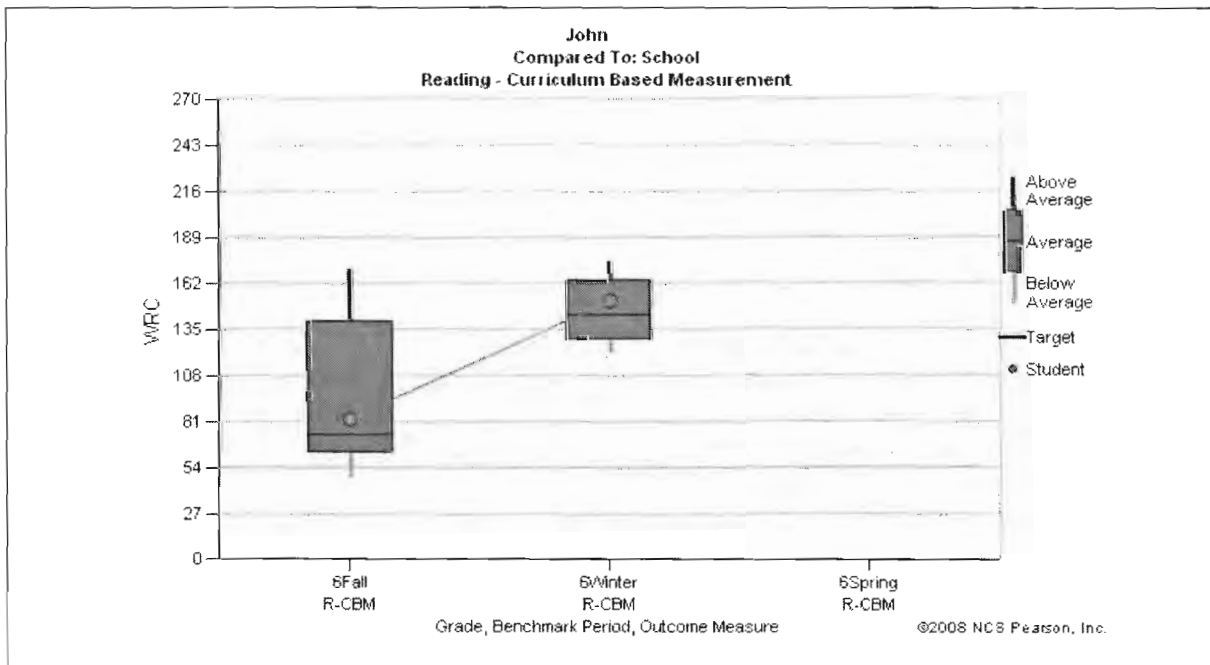
## Progress Monitoring

### 15. How is continuous progress monitoring accomplished at the secondary level?

Perhaps the single hallmark of RTI, regardless of setting, is continuous and frequent progress monitoring. As shown in Table 2, *supra*, CBM also is used at the secondary level as a progress monitoring tool when there are basic skill concerns. Of course, the need for basic skill progress monitoring across all three tiers decreases with increasing grade. For example, the reading progress of *all* Grade 6 middle school students may be monitored using Maze or R-CBM in a Benchmark approach three times per year. An example of general education progress monitoring is shown in Figure 3, below, for a Grade 6 student. Two of the three benchmark periods — fall and winter — are shown. This student read as well as average students in the fall and improved at the same rate as other Grade 6 students from fall to winter.

Figure 3

#### Progress of a General Education Grade 6 Student Using R-CBM Three Times Per Year and a Benchmark Approach

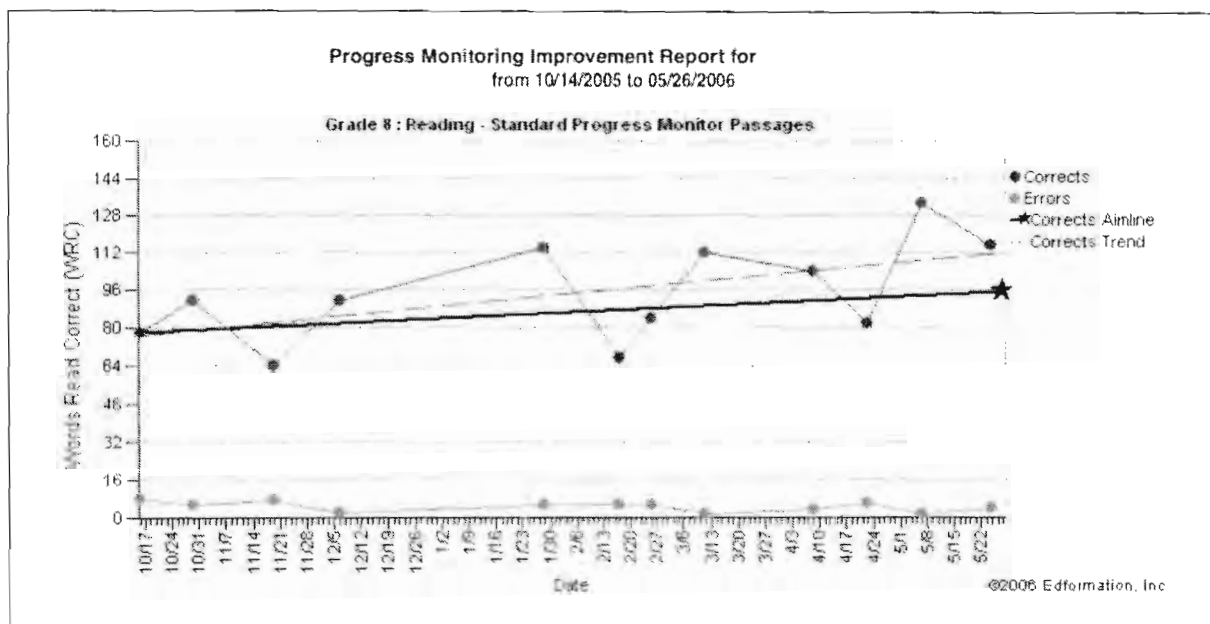


Beyond Grade 6, it is less likely that Tier 1 basic skills Benchmark progress monitoring occurs unless it is a middle school with widespread general education basic skill needs. At the high school level, basic skills progress monitoring with CBM at Tiers 1 and 2 is unlikely.

For Tier 2, where basic skill interventions are delivered (e.g., most middle schools), progress is monitored one to two times per month using CBM. Like students who receive Tier 3 interventions at the elementary level, secondary students in Tier 3 reading interventions are monitored one to two times per week with goals that are individualized based on the severity of the problem. An example of basic skills progress monitoring at Tier 3 is shown in Figure 4, below. This Grade 10 student is receiving an intensive Tier 3 intervention for reading, and progress is monitored every two weeks.

Figure 4

## Tier 3 Reading Progress Monitoring for a Grade 10 Student Using R-CBM on Grade 8 Passages



### 16. What is continuous progress monitoring with decision rules?

Another common feature of RTI shown in Table 2, *supra*, is the Use of Decision Rules for progress monitoring. The solid line in Figure 4, above, represents the *expected* rate of progress. The dashed line represents the *actual* rate of progress or *rate of improvement* (ROI). By comparing the expected to actual rates of progress, decision rules can be used to modify the intervention when necessary.

For example, if the actual rate of progress was below the expected rate of progress, the intervention would be changed. If the actual rate of progress was above the expected rate of progress, the intervention would continue without modification and the expected rate of improvement may be increased. This student is benefiting from the Tier 3 intervention. (For more information on progress monitoring decision rules, see Fuchs and Fuchs (2008).)

### 17. How is progress monitored with students who are provided content area support?

When the Tier 2 focus is on supporting students' success in content area classes, grades must be the basis for evaluating progress (Tindal & Germann, 1991). Although grades are the core of secondary culture, unfortunately most content area teachers have not had training on building effective grading systems; that is, grading systems are constructed to reward what has been learned or summative evaluation, rather than the process of learning or formative evaluation. Additionally, most grading systems inadvertently provide at-risk students with little incentive or feedback on improvement (Sprick, 2006).

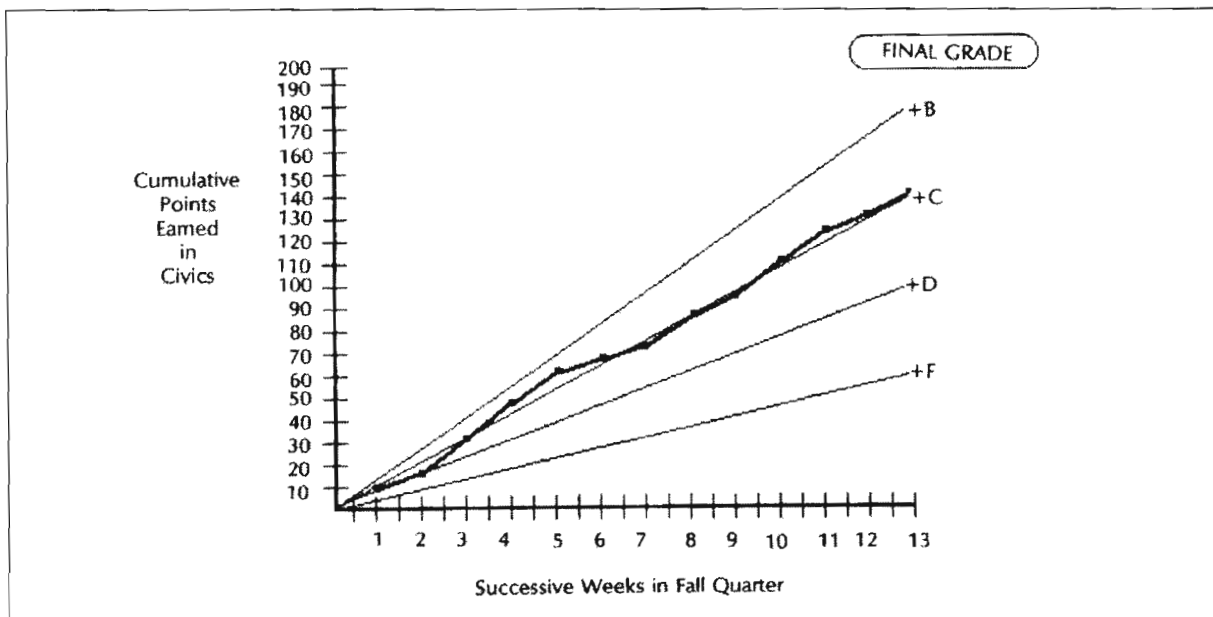
Fortunately, there are excellent solutions to this problem. First, it is possible to construct grading systems that can be used formatively as well as summatively. A simple example is shown in Figure 5, below. This graph is part of a *mainstream consultation agreement* (Tindal & Germann, 1991), a formal

part of a secondary-level IEP detailing the supports provided to student in content classrooms. An individualized grading system based on the activities identified by Sprick (2006) and Tindal and Germann (1991) is created:

1. Clear goals for each class and individual student concerns are identified.
2. Evaluation procedures that create a clear relationship between a student's effort and success are designed.
3. Points are used to provide students feedback on behavior, effort, and learning and are incorporated into the grading system.
4. Students receive graphed feedback on each aspect of their behavioral and academic performance.
5. Weekly rates of improvement toward specific grades are drawn on the graph to ensure that students who receive a Tier 2 intervention through content area support know their current grade and the necessary rate of improvement daily and weekly.

**Figure 5**

**Tier 1 and 2 Progress Monitoring Graph Using Grades Based Upon Expected Growth in Points Per Week**



In Figure 5, this student's rate of improvement is toward a C in Civics. If the daily or week point total is not on a rate of improvement to result in a passing grade, the intervention can be modified.

## Other Implementation Issues in Secondary Schools

### ***18. Where are places to begin in implementation?***

First and foremost, RTI at the secondary level begins with the special education mission statement. Without a clear and focused special education service delivery system, all subsequent efforts to

implement RTI will be similarly unfocused and remain disjointed, inconsistent, and likely not aligned with the needs of students. Second, the mission statement should be followed by an investment in staff development and programs to ensure that intensive basic skill interventions are possible and that the ability to support students with less severe needs in content area classrooms is increased by competencies in SIM. Third, the capacity for universal screening and progress monitoring using CBM should be increased, and training for creating and using effective grading systems in content area classrooms provided. Of particular importance is the use of CBM to write IEP goals and monitor progress for those students who have severe basic skill deficits.

### ***19. What about other academic areas of concern at the secondary level?***

This chapter has tried to lay out some big ideas about secondary RTI using a heuristic of (a) providing intensive basic skill interventions to students with those performance discrepancies, and (b) supporting students with achievement needs that are less severe in content area classrooms. The example used for intensive basic skills was general reading skills. However, students have severe support needs in a variety of other academic areas, including behavior. Other basic skill areas (e.g., mathematics, written expression) also have validated intensive interventions that are suitable for Tiers 2 and 3. Less severe problems in these areas also can be supported by SIM.

### ***20. What about behavior at the secondary level?***

A number of targeted resources are available on RTI and behavior in general (Cook, Sprague, Browning Wright, & Sadler, 2008) and effective behavior support at the middle and high school specifically (Sprick, 2006; Sprick, Borgmeier, & Nolet, 2002; Sprick & Garrison, 2008; Sprick, Garrison, & Howard, 1998). It appears the principles are similar across school levels, but implementation focus and strategies vary considerably.

### ***21. What can we conclude about the implementation of RTI in secondary schools?***

This chapter began with the ideas that we have the knowledge of what to do. Secondary RTI is not without a body of skills and strategies to address students with severe basic skill deficits and those students who need support to benefit from content area instruction. Secondary RTI is not without knowledge as to how to do this, that is, a viable set of options for how to build and implement multi-tiered, early intervening services and RTI. What is lacking, however, are large numbers of middle and high schools that are doing it and doing it well. In many ways, this parallels many other issues in special education and general education. It is hoped that this chapter helps reduce this discrepancy.

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